

VZCZCXRO2091
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV
DE RUEHTC #2029/01 3371331
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 031331Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0769
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 0172
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2030
RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN PRIORITY 4103
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 1715
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 0447
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 0185
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0117
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 2732
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0661
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 0319
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA PRIORITY 0272
RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI PRIORITY 0059
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 0389
RUEHKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY 0175
RUEHKU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY 0242
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY 0430
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 0843
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 5062
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY 0117
RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA PRIORITY 0349
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 0270
RUEHSK/AMEMBASSY MINSK PRIORITY 0143
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 0278
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 1761
RUEHBH/AMEMBASSY NASSAU PRIORITY 0183
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0604
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5002
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 5183
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 0290
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 0312
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 0115
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 0355
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 0386
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 2250
RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE PRIORITY 0215
RUEHSN/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR PRIORITY 0786
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 0176
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO PRIORITY 0203
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 1391
RUEHTG/AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA PRIORITY 0097
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 2899
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1791
RUEHWD/AMEMBASSY WINDHOEK PRIORITY 0079
RUEHAO/AMCONSUL CURACAO PRIORITY 0297
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS PRIORITY 0145
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0052
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY 0600

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 06 THE HAGUE 002029

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/WE (TSMITH), WHA/CCA
HAVANA FOR R NEGRON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/29/2017
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [CU](#) [NL](#)
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/CUBA: LIBERTAD ACT REVIEW

REF: A. STATE 158768
[1](#)B. THE HAGUE 974
[1](#)C. HAVANA 233

THE HAGUE 00002029 001.2 OF 006

Classified By: Economic Section Chief Karen Enstrom
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. While Dutch investments in Cuba remain minimal, nickel exports from Cuba to the Netherlands increased significantly in 2006. Post is not aware of any bilateral trade agreements or exchange programs between Cuba and the Netherlands. However, Post recently learned of plans for a March 2008 Dutch trade mission to Cuba with support from the Netherlands Council for Trade Promotion (NCH). Meanwhile, the GONL and Dutch NGOs remain active advocates for promoting human rights in Cuba. Post is not aware of any high-level diplomatic visits between Cuba and the Netherlands in the past six months. END SUMMARY.

Dutch Investment and Trade with Cuba

¶2. (C) Dutch investments in Cuba remain minimal. Dutch companies trading with Cuba are largely focused on nickel exports to the Netherlands, and sometimes further to Western Europe, and machinery imports related to the cigar industry to Cuba. Nickel exports from Cuba to the Netherlands increased significantly in 2006 (see para 3 and 4). The Embassy is aware of the following companies that are active in Cuba:

-- Damex Shipbuilding and Engineering, established in 1995, operates a facility in the Santiago bay (el Nispero Shipyards) with a workforce of up to 140. Damex serves as the license holder and aftersales service location for Damen Shipyards Holland. The company's website is at www.damex.biz.

THE HAGUE 00002029 002.2 OF 006

-- The Dutch-based ING bank announced in July the closure of its representative office in Havana. ING also closed its Curacao-based Netherlands Caribbean Bank (NCB) after divesting the 50 percent share held by Cuban-based companies Grupo Acemex and Banco Popular de Ahorro. In discussions with Econoff, ING Compliance Group General Manager Heather Loewenthal said the closures were "business-based decisions."

Regarding 2006 press reports that ING faced fines for allegedly transferring money from the U.S. to NCB Havana through NCB Curacao, ING Coordinator for Corporate Compliance Carlos Eric Rasch said ING could not find any record that this had in fact occurred, and added that there was no evidence that the press reports were correct. The bank's website is at www.ing.com.

-- The Rotterdam-based Nirint Shipping B.V. has been exporting nickel from Cuba for approximately 40 years, with estimated annual exports of 30,000 tons or almost half of Cuba's yearly nickel output. However, the total amount fluctuates greatly on an annual basis, and competition from China has increased in recent years. On November 3, Nirint introduced a new vessel for the route Moerdijk-Havana. Nirint's multipurpose vessels import mostly used products including cars and city buses to Cuba and export nickel to the Netherlands. Part of the imported nickel is transported further to Western European countries and China. Nirint's Shipping Director is Hennie Huigen. The company's website is at www.nirint.com.

-- Nirint is part of Fondel Finance B.V., also based in Rotterdam. Fondel's founder is Willem van het Wout, a Dutch multimillionaire who is known for conducting business with 'politically complicated countries.' Wout is also a member of the Board for the Cuban Country Team within the Netherlands Council for Trade Promotion. According to the company website, the Fondel group is responsible for almost 80 percent of all trade between the Netherlands and Cuba.

THE HAGUE 00002029 003.2 OF 006

Per ref C, Wout's business with Cuba is based on a long-time personal friendship with Fidel Castro. In an August 2006

interview with the Dutch press daily Volkskrant, Wout said he did not expect Castro's possible death would influence the status or welfare of his trade ties and company, which will be taken over by family members in the near future. Wout's daughter Merel van het Wout serves as Fidel Castro's personal tailor in the Netherlands, according to the press report. The company's website is at www.fondel.com.

-- Bransma Intern Transport is one of the largest forklift rental companies in the Netherlands with offices in Rotterdam (Schiedam) and Havana, according to its website (www.bransma.com). No other information is available.

-- Lippoel Leaf B.V., a distributor of Cuban cigar leaves, is located in Utrecht, the Netherlands. The company's Director is Gerard van Hattem, who also serves as the Chairman of the Board for the Cuban country team within the Netherlands Council for Trade Promotion. No other information is available.

-- Sluis Cigar Machinery B.V. (SCM), based in Kampen in the Netherlands, is a supplier of new and used machinery and parts to the cigar industry and exports cigar machinery to Cuba. The company's website is at www.cigarmachinery.com.

-- Smart Alliances, located in Amersfoort in the Netherlands, advises on the development of business alliances, including mergers and joint ventures. Some of the company's projects in Cuba are in the area of dairy, poultry and potato production and marketing. The company's website is at www.smart-alliances.nl

-- WOMY, headquartered in Zevenbergen in the Netherlands, exports buses from Rotterdam to Cuba. The company's director is Any van der Heijden. The company's website is at www.womy.nl

THE HAGUE 00002029 004.2 OF 006

www.womy.nl

Dutch-Cuban Trade Figures

13. (U) The following are figures for the total trade between Cuba and the Netherlands in recent years, according to the Dutch Agency for International Business and Cooperation (EVD). The figures are in millions of euros.

| YEAR | IMPORT | EXPORT | TRADE BALANCE |
|------|--------|--------|---------------|
| 2003 | 300.1 | 51.4 | (-)248.7 |
| 2004 | 13.1 | 45.5 | 32.4 |
| 2005 | 12.4 | 80.6 | 68.2 |
| 2006 | 471.4 | 70.6 | (-)400.8 |

14. (U) The significant increase in imports in 2006 is largely due to increased nickel imports. The total value of imported nickel in 2006 was 405 million euros (or approximately \$533.4 million at year-end 2006 exchange rates), according to EVD data.

Trade Agreements/Exchange Programs: None

15. (SBU) Post is not aware of any bilateral trade agreements or exchange programs between Cuba and the Netherlands.

Trade Mission Planned for March 2008

16. (SBU) The Netherlands Council for Trade Promotion (NCH), together with the Rotterdam Top Sport Association, is organizing a March 9-14, 2008 trade mission to Cuba,

THE HAGUE 00002029 005.2 OF 006

according to the NCH website at www.handelsbevordering.nl. Rotterdam Mayor Ivo Opstelten will reportedly visit Havana during this same period to celebrate 25 years of sisterhood between the cities of Rotterdam and Havana. The trade mission, led by Chairman of the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce Frans Lavooij, will be a part of the celebration. The mission intends to further business opportunities in the following areas: maritime and port facilities, food processing (especially dairy products), fertilizers (biological and chemical), water treatment, pharmaceuticals, bio-energy/bio-fuels, sun and wind energy, tourism industry, gas and oil exploration, and public transport. The website says there will also be visits by relevant ministries and government organizations and a reception hosted by the Dutch Embassy in Havana. Separately on November 30, the Amsterdam Chamber of Commerce organized a roundtable discussion on business and trade opportunities in Cuba.

Dutch Actively Promote Human Rights

¶17. (SBU) As reported in reftel B, the GONL continues to actively promote human rights in Cuba. In a June 4 letter to the Dutch parliament, Dutch Foreign Minister Verhagen noted that the Netherlands maintains regular contacts with those segments of Cuban Civil society that advocate a peaceful transition in a non-violent manner and respect for the internationally recognized human rights in Cuba. The FM further noted that he did not favor relaxing the EU's Cuba policy unless the human rights situation substantially improves.

¶18. (C) According to MFA staff, there is no unity within the EU on lifting sanctions against Cuba, so the suspended sanctions policy and the June 18, 2007, EU statement will continue to guide the EU approach.

THE HAGUE 00002029 006.2 OF 006

High Level Diplomatic Visits: None

¶19. Post is not aware of any recent high-level diplomatic visits between Cuba and the Netherlands in the past six months.
Arnall